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ABSTRACT

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Personal Moral Development: Perceptions of 14 Moral Leaders

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1

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated perceptions of 14 contemporary moral leaders regarding primary influences on their moral development. Findings indicated a number of important factors influenced the participants' moral development, including parents, spirituality, education/mentors/friends, and peak experiences. This study has implications for those in the caring professions for their own moral leadership development and their support of others. Awareness of the factors that influenced the 14 participants, recognized for their moral leadership, can promote a keen awareness of moral formation factors. Transformational therapeutic approaches may be used to support positive moral leadership development during stressful life shifts and experiences.

Key Words: Leadership, Morality, Development, Influence, Change, Reflection, Care, Justice, Qualitative Research, Spirituality

Personal Moral Development: Perceptions of 14 Moral Leaders

Introduction

Materialism, individualism, and lack of civility are pervasive, cultural problems across businesses, professions, services, and governmental and educational institutions. Kanungo and Mendonca (1998) claim money and material possession are indicators of success and failure in every area of human life. Prince (1997) sees a similar situation, commenting that Americans live in a society that has a much better sense of individualism than community. Tappan (1998, ¶. 1) notes contemporary life is a time of "profound moral crisis, chaos and confusion." And Elshtain (1999) suggests central challenges to the American culture are increasing inequalities and a deteriorating moral system. Elshtain adds qualities necessary for a functioning democracy are disappearing—family, community, faith, education, trusted media institutions, and a public moral philosophy. Additional cultural problems concern the influence of media and the conforming influence of the peer culture. Dalton and Petric (1997) agree the negative and conforming influence of the peer culture often devalues the educational goals of moral and civic responsibility. One important cultural problem is the increasing lack of faith in leaders and institutions. King (1997) posits that many hope for moral leadership, but there are too many examples of leaders who appear to pursue objectives that are not moral.

One question regarding moral leadership is how are leaders developed who would fit Burns' (1978) description: leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation? These are leaders who aim to raise the consciousness of their followers by appealing to moral values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism, not to

baser emotions such as fear, greed, jealousy, or hatred (Yukl, 1994). Burns and others have called this process transformational leadership (Hickman, 1999; Northouse, 2001). Another model for moral leadership is Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership which sees servant leaders as those who first serve and then lead. There are other terms and definitions for positive, ethical, moral leadership such as Roepke's (1995) view that moral leaders are those who have a positive, lasting effect or influence on others and/or the world. The purpose of this study was to examine this question of personal moral development from the perspectives of identified, contemporary moral leaders.

Literature Review

Frameworks for Moral Development

There are a number theoretical frameworks that guide scientific inquiry regarding moral development. Erikson's (1963) eight stages of personality development indicate human development continues throughout life. He believed "the ego is developed through adaptation to the demands of society, which is characterized by a series of crises [stages]" (Bae, 1999, ¶ 12). Kohlberg's (1969, 1979, 1981) Six-Stage Theory of Moral Development grew out of Erikson's theory. This model describes moral development as proceeding through six stages within three levels. Level I is pre-conventional moral reasoning, and at this level, individuals are highly egocentric having concerns centered on their own interests and others they care about. At Level II, reasoning of individuals reaches the conventional level—concern for maintaining the social order. Moral judgments are thus guided by obedience to rules and meeting expectations of others, particularly those in positions of authority. A post-conventional or principled perspective guides Level III. These principles are independent of and often prior to approval by

society. The central emphasis at this stage is finding the most just arrangement for all people within society (Pascarella, 1997). Spohn (2000, ¶ 21) notes Kohlberg's moral claims are "based on universalizable duties rather than on any emotive incentive or practical consequence. He grounded morality simply and exclusively on justice..."

Kohlberg's theoretical work led to a number of models and instruments designed to understand and measure the process of moral reasoning of individuals. For example, Rest (1997) developed a Four-Component Model of Morality, which describes the psychological processes necessary for moral behavior to occur. The components of Rest's model include moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character (King, 1997).

Kohlberg's research participants included only men. Gilligan (1982), a student of Kohlberg, was the first to note Kohlberg's moral scale is "biased in favor of men...[she] concluded this bias when she found that women were being consistently assigned to lower moral categories on Kohlberg's moral development scale..." (Bae, 1999, ¶ 71). Gilligan's studies indicated a difference in the way women think, leading to her three-part Care Model—Orientation to Self, Morality of Care, and Morality of Nonviolence stages. She elevated nonviolence to "a principle governing all moral judgment and action" (Bookman & Aboulafia, 2000, ¶ 20; 2001).

This Care Model (Gilligan, 1992) notes differences between the way men and women often approach moral problems. Bookman and Aboulafia, (2000) explain Gilligan's concept did not represent the idea that care is necessarily associated with the nature of women, rather that women were voicing realities not previously expressed. Linn (2001, ¶ 16) states:

In Kohlberg's morality of justice, the moral realm is constituted by abstract principles... [therefore] care would always be inferior to justice. Gilligan highlights the connection between morality and subjectivity, which implies that to be a subject is to be a moral subject, is to have a moral voice, is to assume a position of resistance.

Moral Influences

In addition to those who test and categorize how moral judgments are made, others question the derivation of moral decisions. In an attempt to understand the derivation of moral decisions, Crigger (1996) first asked the question: What is the best way for ethics to claim the lived experience? She adds the challenge for ethics is "to take very seriously indeed what it means that moral agents are in the first instance embodied, cultural, imaginative creatures" (p. 33). Her study of the works of Wilson (1995), Johnson (1994), Kass (1999), and Tierney (1994) revealed a common feature among them: the conviction that moral universals have their origins in the human form. She adds another question raised by the authors involves the integrating of experience and theory, and she comments there is something strange when a body of theory about human action insulates itself from "lived experience" (p. 37).

Spohn (2000) suggests there is a social dimension of conscience, noting the importance of groups, family, and community. He also indicates faith traditions and spiritual practices are central to Christian moral development. Similarly, Tappan (1998, ¶ 32) suggests moral functioning is a cultural activity, a vernacular language. He explains "This vernacular moral language, moreover, is shared by persons who share the same activities, who are engaged in similar social/moral practices." As discussed earlier,

Elshtain (1999) also includes a discussion of the importance of family, community, faith, and education.

McCabe, Dukerich, and Dutton (1991) assert there is strong support in the psychology literature for the belief that education is one of the most powerful and consistent correlates of the development of judgment in individuals. As an example, Spohn (2000) notes in recent years public schools have often been charged with shaping the values and behaviors of students. According to Mathews (1997), The American Council on Education has reexamined the civic responsibilities of higher education. Schwartz and Templeton (1997) report on the Templeton Honor Roll for Character-Building Colleges that recognized institutions that emphasize character building as part of the undergraduate experience.

Roepke (1995) suggests an integrated approach is appropriate for developing moral leadership among students in the areas of journalism and mass communication. Further, he explains the "spirit of the theme must flow through every classroom lecture, student assignment, laboratory session, seminar, and group presentation" (p. 75). Ciulla (1995) agrees that ethics is essential to leadership. She further maintains leadership ethics should be responsive to the ethical concerns of society and needs to take into account the research on leadership. Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996) examine a leadership model occasionally used in school administration. They call this model an ethic of care and describe it as one in which caring emphasizes connection through responsibility to others rather than to rights and rules. "An ethic of caring does not establish a list of guiding principles to blindly follow, but rather a moral touchstone for decision making" (pp. 277-78).

Some universities and colleges use a service learning approach to assist student development for character and citizenship. The underlying pedagogy of service learning is experiential learning, and according to Kolb (1984), experiential learning is the process that links education, work, and personal development. Lisman (1998) maintains service learning is a fairly recent and effective pedagogical tool for teaching ethics.

Moral Development/Real-life Examples

Dalton and Petrie (1997) held discussions with seven undergraduate students in order to gain a student-centered perspective on peer culture. The students were recognized for their exemplary character, community service, high level of moral leadership, and civic commitment. The researchers explored how college peer groups influenced the students' ethical commitments. The students shared a number of observations; however, when they were asked why their values differed from other students, they suggested they "had always been this way" (p. 21). These students seemed unable to explain their own moral development.

Murphy and Enderle (1995) state examples are instructive in any endeavor including ethical leadership, and they add that with regard to ethical leadership, "examples may be inspirational: they may open new horizons and show what is possible, based on accomplishments already realized" (p. 117). The researchers profiled four well-known Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) to illustrate their ethical leadership. Insights regarding the CEOs were drawn from their writings and speeches as well as other sources which demonstrated their leadership abilities. This secondary data about the leaders provided examples of ethical leadership, and common themes describing them emerged.

Childs (2001) in his review of *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* (Allahyari, 2000) notes the author investigated moral development among the volunteers at Loaves and Fishes and the Salvation Army. Allahyari indicated volunteers develop morally through their participation. Because the two charities are different in perspective, the volunteers' development may have been different. Loaves and Fishes grew out of the Catholic worker movement, stressing the dignity of all people. Everyone is accepted without condition. The Salvation Army residents were mostly homeless people often with substance-abuse problems. Residents are expected to work, and moral growth lies in the Salvationist vision of a quest for self-esteem (Childs, 2001).

Colby and Damon (1992) studied 23 "moral exemplars," who have dedicated their lives to making the world a better place (p. 27). These researchers suggest character and commitment are evidenced in action, and note studies investigating people who have accomplished moral deeds may indeed hold meaning. They believe an individuals' moral commitment is best examined through questions that rely on "the person's own recollection" (p. 9).

Piper (1989) believes the etiology of moral development could be discovered in every culture by asking, "Where are the heroes?" He suggests that in order to answer that question, each culture must explore the realities of leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility and then provide interesting and exciting examples of these real people. He adds it is beneficial to ask questions such as: "What were the challenges these individuals faced? How did they sort through the options? What actions did they take? and What was it that led these individuals to conduct their affairs as they did?" (p. 27). Piper presented salient issues but did not provide answers or suggestions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of 14 identified, contemporary moral leaders regarding their own moral development and to clearly identify and explain the factors which made significant contributions to their moral development. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature by providing a new set of real-life examples of moral leaders and builds on and adds to the Murphy and Enderle (1995) study of 4 well-known CEOs and Colby and Damon's (1992) 23 "moral exemplars."

*Methods**Context*

This phenomenological study used open-ended interviews to investigate perceptions of 14 contemporary moral leaders regarding their own moral development. The phenomenological approach was best suited for the purpose of this study to gain an understanding of the perceptions of participants who have a shared experience and to describe their subjective experiences (Berg, 1995; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002; Schwandt, 2001).

A constructivist approach most closely parallels the philosophical underpinnings of this study. This approach assumes an "emphasis on the world of experience as it is lived, felt, undergone by social actors....what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective..." (Schwandt, 1998, p. 236). What participants perceive as real is a construction of their minds. Individuals can have multiple, often conflicting constructions, and all of these can provide understanding for them regarding life circumstances (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Seale, 1999; Schwandt, 2001).

Data Generation, Collection, and Processing

Participants. This study included two groups of participants: survey participants (i.e., graduate students) and interview participants (i.e., moral leaders). The survey participants consisted of 57 graduate students who selected potential leaders for interviews based on a Moral Leadership Rating Scale (MLRS) (Maldonado, 1998).

The participants were selected in one of two ways. Initial participants were selected through the survey process. Subsequently, these original participants nominated others they considered as "moral leaders." According to Berg (1995), this technique of snowballing involves "first identifying [those] with relevant characteristics and interviewing them.... these subjects are then asked for the names of other people who possess the same attributes as they do" (p. 33).

Most of the participants are public figures who have written books, have been the subject of books or articles, are known locally or nationally, and/or have received awards and recognition for their work. The participants included six females and eight males, all white Americans. Their ages range from 35 to over 70. Although African-Americans were included in the survey portraits, and three (3) were selected by the survey participants as potential participants, none from this group was available to be interviewed.

Profiles of the 14 participants (See Appendix) are presented to provide portraits of them, and to place their responses in the context of who they are and how they have lived their lives. Their names are included because all participants are public figures who agreed in advance to have their names disclosed. The participants are presented in alphabetical order; the information for the profiles came primarily from the vitae participants provided to the researchers. In some cases, additional information was gathered from publications and books written by and/or about the participants.

Instruments. Two instruments were used in this study: a participant identification survey (MLRS) and an open-ended interview protocol. The survey included 39 short portraits/profiles of unnamed public figures that were selected from a variety of fields including medicine, politics, the military, religion, education, journalism, psychology, law, entertainment, and business. The survey also included a Likert scale for rating the moral and ethical levels of profiles with (1) being the least and (6) being the most moral and ethical. The following definition of moral leadership was provided in the survey's instructions: The moral leader is one who has a positive, lasting effect or influence on others and/or the world (Roepke, 1995).

The second instrument consisted of ten open-ended interview questions about moral leadership, and was used to gather information from the 14 selected moral leaders. For the purposes of this paper, analyses of the following questions are presented: What and who led you to become the ethical/moral leader that you are? What were/are your primary influences?

Data collection and processing. There were three steps in the data collection procedures: the survey of graduate students, the open-ended interviews with the selected leaders, and document analysis. In the first step, 57 university graduate students selected "moral leaders" who would be invited to participate in the interviews. They were asked to rate the leaders described by the portraits using the MLRS. Twenty-one public figures, who were chosen by 75% or more of the graduate students as being in the top one-half of the moral continuum, were invited to participate. The second step consisted of recruitment for the open-ended interviews. Letters were sent to the 21 selected leaders, and then follow up telephone calls were made. Four leaders' responses were indecisive, and three nationally prominent leaders declined. Thus, of the 21 potential participants, 12 were available for interviews. Initial participants nominated two additional participants as "moral leaders." In addition, the researchers gathered data about the

participants from journals, books, records, and other publications either written by or about the participants.

Appointments for the interviews were scheduled over the phone with the participants at a time and place convenient to them. All the interviews were audio taped and the tapes were transcribed verbatim. During the interviews, the researchers wrote notes about the answers of the participants to later develop tentative ideas regarding categories and relationships (Maxwell, 1996). The interviews lasted from 30 to 50 minutes. The variation in length of interview time did not appear to be related to whether the interview was by telephone or face-to-face. The researchers ensured telephone and face-to-face interviews were consistent by using the same interview questions and allowing the participants as much time as they wished to respond to each question.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was the central technique used to identify the issues and themes that the participants emphasized in their responses (Berg, 1995; Maxwell, 1996). First, the transcripts of the leaders' interviews were read in their entirety; next, each verbatim response to the interview question was reviewed on a line-by-line basis. Then, for the responses to the question, units of information--words, phrases, concepts--that met the following requirements were identified: they contained information that contributed to the meaning of each research question, they were phrases or words that could stand on their own as pieces of data, and they were meaningful to the extent they could be interpreted similarly by individuals other than the researchers. After the units of information were identified, they were coded and grouped into subcategories based on their common content or theme. The subcategories were grouped into broader or core categories. The labels for the subcategories and categories were chosen based on the participants' own

words (e. g., parents, spirituality). Thematic connections and recurring patterns began to emerge from sorting the data into subcategories and categories.

Steps to Ensure Trustworthiness

Dependability, parallel to reliability, shows that the process of inquiry is logical, traceable, and documented and is dependable over time and across researchers and methods (Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to enhance dependability, a qualitative researcher who was familiar with the study provided feedback regarding methodology and coding procedures and verified the subcategories and core categories accurately reflected the information conveyed by the participants. The recording, preservation, and transcription of the audiotapes served as another determinant of dependability; the transcripts were "preserved unobscured" (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Transferability, parallel to external validity, addresses the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. Confirmability, parallel to objectivity, establishes that the data and interpretations of the inquiry have logical and clear linking associations, findings, and interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researchers have studied leadership vis a vis moral leadership and clearly have a bias in favor of transformational leadership and moral leaders such as those interviewed. However, the researchers reflected on their own potential biases and predispositions using this reflexivity in an attempt not to affect understanding of the process or the outcomes (Krefting, 1991; Merriam, 2002).

Credibility, parallel to internal validity, provides assurances of the fit between respondents' views of their experiences and the researchers' reconstructions and representation of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). As defined by Maxwell (1996), credibility is the correctness

of a description, conclusion, explanation, or interpretation. In order to enhance credibility, the researchers often included low inference descriptors, verbatim comments (Johnson, 1997). The researchers used multiple data sources. They also looked for responses that might disconfirm their expectations; this is often called negative case sampling (Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, the participants' responses often revealed shared perceptions, and according to Gay and Airasian (2000), researchers can have more confidence in their interpretations if there are shared perceptions.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) in their discussion of verisimilitude, ask whether a particular text has a relationship to some agreed-upon opinion or opinions. The results of this study are in agreement with a large body of previous research in the area of moral development, particularly Kohlberg's (1969) Theory of Moral Development and Gilligan's (1982) Morality of Care and Morality of Nonviolence.

Findings

This section provides a narrative description of participants' answers to the interview questions. Participants were identified with a single title (e. g., religious leader, professor, lawyer, or doctor), although most of them have participated in many disciplines. Many of them might easily have been categorized in multiple areas such as educator, professor, writer, publisher, editor, lecturer, public speaker, activist, advocate, or others as indicated in their biographies. In response to the questions: "What and who led you to become the ethical/moral leader that you are? What were/are your primary influences?" the participants provided a variety of answers. The primary areas they discussed included parents, spirituality, education and/or teachers, mentors and/or friends, and peak events or life experiences.

Parents

Ten of the leaders discussed the influence of their parents on their moral development, with a particular emphasis on the role of mothers. Jim Wallis described his parents as strong Christians who taught valuable lessons such as "play with the kids no one plays with, be nice, defend the ones being picked on, and stand up for what you believe even if no one agrees with you." The parents of Morris Dees were, likewise, influential. He described his parents as poor cotton pickers who worked in the fields side by side with black people and who treated black people with respect at a time and a place when this was not the norm.

Pedro Jose Greer recounted that by watching his parents and listening to their conversations, he learned to want to do the right things and to emulate their behaviors. He added his father taught him that being a doctor was primarily about taking care of people. Harold Kushner recounted that his father had been inspirational to him, saying:

My father was a businessman and a very astute and successful businessman who, to my knowledge, had the opportunity to do some shady things and never took advantage of it. Tax breaks, things like that. On the contrary, after he died, we observed the memorial, there were people he had known in business who came over and told me stories of how he had gone out of his way to help them financially.... I mean people he loaned money ...people he recommended for a better job...He was living those values, and yet, he never articulated it....

Three other participants revealed their mothers were particularly influential. Rosemary Radford Ruether described her mother as "a model of family integrity," and Joan Chittister suggested while both of her parents had a powerful commitment to justice,

her mother gave her a strong feminist training without ever using feminist language.

Michael Crosby stated his mother was a "wisdom person" and he and his brothers agreed she was the "moral force in their lives." He also noted, "my mother prodded me to work for justice, for women, and for minorities."

Spirituality

Nine of the participants discussed the role of spirituality in their moral development. Miriam Therese Winter said she believes her religious vocation was a calling from God and added, "God nudges or pulls us where we are to go." Kathy Thornton recounted a similar experience; she said it was the grace of God at work within her that led her to her religious congregation and then to her commitment to the poor. Shelley Douglass revealed she became a Catholic because of the influence of the Catholic Worker Movement and this was most formative. Reading scripture was formative for Joan Chittister. From the age of 16 in her Benedictine community, Chittister read scripture three times a day, and she stated these readings and subsequent reflections were most revealing to her. Harold Kushner indicated taking his faith seriously enough to become a rabbi "entailed a commitment to a certain level of moral and ethical behavior...discipline and charity and concern for the oppressed, sensitivity to people's feelings, that was all part of the package."

Four of the participants discussed church/spiritual experiences that were influential for them. Joseph Sciortino revealed his experience of attending a spiritual formation retreat and later experiencing spiritual direction was morally formative for him. At an early age, Jim Wallis explored the black churches of Detroit, Michigan and found they welcomed him and became essential to his formation. He added that he considers the

black churches his "spiritual home." Tony Hall discussed his attendance at a prayer breakfast which he really did not want to attend. He noted this led him in a two-year search saying:

I was hunting for God and I didn't know what I needed to do and I was a afraid to admit it to anybody that I was searching....I just didn't know anybody at the time, then a freshman congressman invited me to his house...He said he wanted to talk about faith.

Education/Teachers

Education and/or teachers were identified as morally formative for six of the participants. As an example, Shelley Douglass remarked that her school civics classes were important to her. She said not only did she learn the US stands for citizen participation and the responsibility to effect changes, but by being in school in other countries, she was more able to see clearly there was much that needed changing in the US. Marie Carol Hurley revealed one of her high school teachers made it clear that she just "expected her to be upright," and she felt the need to live up to that expectation. Rosemary Radford Ruether stated her education provided good role models and good teachers and this helped to clarify values. Morris Dees commented that going to college and getting an education made a significant difference in his view of life.

Spiritual formation at the seminary was important for Thomas Gumbleton who maintained this education allowed him to learn what was necessary to be a moral teacher and a moral leader. However, he added that his seminary education focused on personal justice, personal integrity, and living the laws, and these served as a foundation for a later focus on social justice. Jim Wallis remembered his high school writing teacher as being

influential in his moral development. He recalled that this teacher forced the students to read books that were "full of moral discourse" such as John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, and then she would encourage moral discussion. He added, "She forced you to take a position, a moral position, and maybe that's what moral education is--forcing people to take a position on the issues of life."

Mentors/Friends

Five of the participants mentioned friends and/or mentors as being significant to their moral development. For example, Harold Kushner discussed the rabbis he had known when growing up to be foremost in his development. Kathy Thornton noted friends, community members, and others who asked her questions and challenged her assisted her moral growth. Miriam Therese Winter discussed similar circumstances. Tony Hall mentioned friends and colleagues who helped him in his search for God. Jim Wallis stated both mentors and friends were influential for him. He mentioned mentors, both historical ones such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Mohandas K. Gandhi, and those contemporary to him such as Martin Luther King, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Nelson Mandela, and Dorothy Day were inspirational and influential. He added,

I have over my study a whole wall of pictures of people, and it is people like them who I think have been the moral leaders, and they kind of, to use the biblical language of Hebrews, they are like a "cloud of witnesses," and they kind of hover over my study, and I always feel accountable to them. Because they are my mentors; they are my family tree; they are ones I aspire to follow, to try and be more like them.

Jim Wallis said his friends were equally important to his process of moral development, particularly his black friends and their families. He recounted a story about his friend Butch that changed his worldview:

Butch took me to his home to meet his mother and brothers and sisters. His father had passed away, and his mother was raising the family, and she was a wonderful, loving woman like my mother who was afraid that her son's ideas would get him into trouble like my mother was. She wasn't at all that political, certainly not militant, but she told me about certain experiences that men in her family had had at the hands of the Detroit police department--her husband and sons and brothers. She told me what advice she would give her kids if they ever got lost and couldn't find their way home. She would tell them if you see a policeman, you need to run and hide, duck behind a building, under a stairwell, don't let him see you, and when he passes, you come out and find your own way back home. When she said that, my mother's words echoed in my head because she always told us if you are ever lost, can't find your way home, in a strange neighborhood, look for a policeman because he is your friend. Now that was a converting moment for me, a formative moment for me when I realized that my mother and this woman were alike in every way, but her being black and my mother being white made all the difference.

Peak Events/Life Experiences

All participants discussed peak events and/or life experiences as being important to their moral development, although the topics they discussed were quite diverse. The areas of primary focus included: the 1960s; situations in which they felt compelled to speak the

truth; travel and immersion experiences; church renewal and Vatican II; the death of a family member; and insights and understandings of the self.

The events of the 1960s--the Civil Rights Movement, an awareness of racism, and the Vietnam War--were important to the moral development of five of the participants. Shelley Douglass recounted after returning to the US from Europe, she found the events surrounding civil rights quite shocking, so she decided to do what she could to support the movement. The Civil Rights Movement also influenced Jim Wallis who recalled that although he never met Dr. King, he was in the movement and called Dr. King "an ever-present force."

Awareness of racism during the 1960s and 1970s was formative for Michael Crosby who recalled an assignment:

The parish was one that went from white to black, and we lost 1000 white families as the black people moved in, and that was what forced me to think about the traditional moral codes that had theoretically guided the Catholic community, but when tested, proved to be quite weak.

Morris Dees recounted that when he got to the University of Alabama in 1960,

They had just integrated, and a young black girl came to try to get in the school, and they beat her back with rocks and bricks, and she didn't really get in; she had to leave. The mob of about 12,000 people came to the campus to keep her back for the first integration at the university. In that particular case, I watched and observed and felt strong feelings for the underdog....visually coming in contact with that made me feel sick to my stomach, that I would see that mob trying to beat on this one little girl.

The Vietnam War period was formative for Joan Chittister. She noted her realization that the war was unconstitutional because it had never been submitted to the Congress of the US was a turning point, saying, "That's when it happened. Here I was dragged onto a higher ethical plane, ironically enough, by virtue of the law."

Four of the participants recounted they felt compelled to speak the truth because of circumstances in which they found themselves. Marie Carol Hurley related a time when others were being falsely accused, so she had to speak for those caught in the "immoral judgment." Michael Crosby discussed several occasions when he felt obliged to speak the truth, noting one issue was racism, saying generally in 1973, people in the churches did not want to hear this message from the pulpit.

Both Jim Wallis and Morris Dees discussed incidents concerning racism and how their actions caused problems at their respective churches. Jim Wallis recounted a time when he was about 15 years old and he had begun to have questions as to why people were the way they were in Detroit. He asked:

How come we lived the way we did as white people and black people lived such different lives just a few blocks away, which is black Detroit, two cities living side by side? This is like the early 60's. I began to wonder about this, and it caused a problem in the church. The questions were not positively received, but I had learned from my parents to stand up for what I believed no matter who thought differently, and so I did, and it got me pushed out of that little church that I had grown up in, and they told me that Christianity has nothing to do with the issue of racism.

Morris Dees' discussed a similar situation. After the incident of the beating of the black girl at the University of Alabama, he came back to his devotion class at church. He said,

I gave a kind of lesson saying I don't think if Jesus were here, he'd be doing that. I don't think he'd be throwing bricks and rocks. Probably, he would look at us as human beings. I got a lot of open mouths because you didn't talk like that back then. Before the next Sunday, the preacher of the church came to my house....He came to me and never mentioned the lesson in class, but said that he thought because the Sunday school was growing, that we needed to get a person with more experience and maturity to teach the lesson, and I could be the assistant. He never mentioned what I said.

Four of the participants stated travel to other countries and/or to areas of poverty was formative for them. Shelley Douglass recounted that her experience of living in other countries taught her people were essentially the same. Both Kathy Thornton and Rosemary Radford Ruether said their experiences of visiting areas of poverty helped them in their formation toward social justice. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether related:

The peak event was when I was in graduate school. The chaplain of the university organized a whole group to get out and spend a summer in Mississippi with the Vice-Minister in 1965. Obviously, I was already making some decisions about being involved in social justice, but then to actually go and commit yourself to that kind of experience of being on the side of the black poor of Mississippi at that point was a peak experience and a key turning point.

Tony Hall discussed his time in the Peace Corps as formative:

In the Peace Corps, they taught me how to be; you know, you're no longer an American. You have to learn how to live in a different society, live in a different culture. It's not comfortable; it's like real culture shock. I saw so many poor people that started to get me thinking about wanting to help somebody less fortunate than me. I started to think about these moral issues and issues of principle.

Joan Chittister and Thomas Gumbleton, both Catholic Church leaders, remarked that church changes--church renewal and Vatican II--helped them to see a different set of values. As an example, Joan Chittister said changes in religious life provided an awareness for her that "everything that is legal is not moral." Thomas Gumbleton explained the importance of the Vatican Council, commonly referred to as Vatican II, and how concepts differed from his earlier education:

The Council teaching emphasized that it isn't just my individual salvation that's important, it's the transformation of the whole world that's important....it is our task to transform the world into as close an image of the reign of God as possible. So that really pushes you into a social justice sense of concern, as opposed to or distinct from, personal or individual.

Two of the participants said the death of a family member was a life occurrence that changed their way of thinking. Pedro Jose Greer revealed the death of his sister changed his life. She died in a car accident at the age of 17 while he was in medical school, and he vowed to dedicate his life of service to her. Joan Chittister revealed the

death of her cousin and the circumstances surrounding his death were life-changing experiences for her. She said:

My boy cousin, an only child, was brought home from Vietnam in a coffin...and I sat down with my uncle and said, Uncle Phil I don't know what to say. He said to me, and his answer to me is still burned into my forehead. He said, well Joan, thank you very much, but he said *there's really nothing to say*. He said we're very lucky. I said, lucky, Uncle Phil? He said, yes, we're very lucky. At least our son died a hero. Now this was after months of napalming, months of the total eradication of peasant crops, months of an illegal war, and my uncle had been brought to this point, brainwashed, into thinking at least my son is a hero. I walked out of that funeral home. My life had changed.

Six of the participants revealed realizations or insights about themselves or others helped in their personal development. For example, Harold Kushner realized when he chose to become an author, he was in the position to move others to follow his thinking, saying he stepped out of the role of religious leader and became "advice giver." Kathy Thornton revealed

one of the most formative experiences for me was coming to understand myself, because I'm a woman being oppressed by the patriarchal system, and I think that event caused me to look at oppression and see the effect of it, and then not only see it for myself but see oppression around me in other areas. So that was a very significant effect.

Miriam Therese Winter's experience was similar. She recounted her experience of exclusion by the church: "I'm in a position to teach liturgy to priests, and then I'm forbidden permission to stand in the pulpit and preach. So I go to the Protestant pulpit where I'm invited and preach there."

Rosemary Radford Ruether revealed it was insightful for her to learn justice begins with the self: "You start with yourself. There's no point in promoting action in other people without doing it yourself." Morris Dees said his decision to work for justice grew out of his decision to honor his lawyer's pledge to do justice. Additionally, Joseph Sciortino revealed he learned sometimes a negative experience could be a positive learning experience. He said, "Bad experiences can lead to good happenings."

Discussion

Summary

Analyses of the responses indicated parents were highly influential in the moral formation of ten of the participants, including a cross section of professions--religion, medicine, law, business, and education. This finding supports previous research by Elshtain (1999); Gilligan (1982, 1992); and Spohn (2000). The influence of mothers was mentioned by four participants, while paternal influence was stressed by two participants. This might be explained because children have traditionally spent more time with their mothers, and/or mothers are often regarded as the moral and spiritual guides of families, "models of family integrity."

Another finding indicated spirituality was important for nine of the participants. Their comments included "the grace of God at work led to... a commitment to the poor," and "God nudges or pulls us where we are to go," and "the black churches of Detroit welcomed me, became critical to my formation, and became my spiritual home." It could be inferred from this finding that spiritual guidance is an important element in the development of a moral leader (Elshtain, 1999; Spohn, 2000).

In the area of moral development, findings also showed that education and/or teachers were morally formative for six of the participants. Again this is reflective of other research (e.g., Elshtain, 1999; Matthews, 1997; McCabe, et al, 1991; Spohn, 2000; Tappan, 1998). One of the participants defined moral education as "--forcing people to take a position on the issues of life." It appears, directly or indirectly, education influenced these leaders as they have spent their lives "taking a position."

Five participants mentioned friends and/or mentors as being significant to their moral formation. Friends, community members, and others who asked questions and challenged the participants' views and positions on issues greatly assisted in their moral growth. Earlier research also identified the impact of respected mentors, peers, and historical figures in moral formation (Gilligan, 1982, 1992; Spohn, 2000; Tappan, 1998).

It is both interesting and somewhat surprising to note all participants discussed peak events and/or life experiences as being important to their moral development, even though the topics they discussed were quite diverse. While this finding is consistent with other research (Childs, 2001; Colby & Damon, 1992; Crigger, 1996), it is interesting to note a large number of the participants are writers and writers often keep journals of past events that in turn lead to reflection.

Four of the participants reported they felt compelled to speak the truth because of circumstances in which others were being falsely accused, and abused because of race, and/or an illegal war. Additionally, four of the participants perceived travel to other countries or to areas of poverty was formative for them. One expressed that the experience of living in other countries taught her people were essentially the same. Three other participants said their experiences of visiting areas of poverty helped them in their

formation toward social justice. It was not surprising to note two Catholic Church leaders remarked church changes, renewal and Vatican II, helped them to see a different set of values and similarly, moved them in the direction of social justice. Burns (1978), Greenleaf (1977), and Marshall, et al, (1996) posited the influence of seeing the world through another lens as an influence on moral formation.

Finally, six of the participants perceived realizations or insights about themselves or others helped in their personal formations. This finding also seems to confirm the value of reflection. For example, two women religious leaders stated that their personal experiences of oppression provided insights for them. Moreover, one other participant indicated it was insightful for her to learn justice begins with the self; another participant revealed his decision to work for justice grew out of his decision to honor his lawyer's pledge to try to do justice. Another participant stated he learned sometimes a negative experience can be a positive learning experience, adding this sometimes provides new opportunities for personal insight.

In summary, the results of this study are in agreement with a number of theorists in the area of moral development, including Crigger (1996), Spohn (2000) and Elshtain (1999). Crigger's belief that theory about human action is appropriately equated with lived experience is similar to the participants' discussion of peak experiences. Both Spohn and Elshtain emphasized the importance of family, faith, and education—areas a number of participants discussed.

This study also indicates areas of agreement with traditional research in the area of moral development particularly Kohlberg's (1969) and Gilligan's (1982) theories. It might be inferred that all of the participants demonstrate a post-conventional or principled perspective as

described by Kohlberg. The central emphasis at this stage is finding the most just arrangement for all people within society; these principles or belief systems are often without societal approval (Pascarella, 1997). All of the participants discussed justice issues such as racism, sexism, materialism, issues of wealth and poverty, and concern for the oppressed. Several indicated a disregard for the approval of society (Kohlberg, 1979, 1981). Joan Chittister put it well saying, "Everything that is legal is not moral."

Gilligan's Care Model (1982; 1992) notes differences between the way men and women often approach moral problems, but Bookman and Aboulafia (2000) explain Gilligan's concept did necessarily mean care is associated with the nature of women, rather that women were voicing realities not previously expressed. The participants shared an orientation toward the stages of Morality of Care and Morality of Nonviolence. All discussed caring for others and fostering relationships as part of their missions. In addition, seven of the participants are peace activists, including Tony Hall who was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Limitations and Strengths

One perceived limitation of this study may be that it is not generalizable in the usual quantitative sense; however, concepts discussed by the participants may have transferability to certain other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The sample of participants might be viewed as both a limitation and a strength. The somewhat homogeneous nature of the sample may be considered a limitation, but their commonalities make them appropriate participants for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Munhall, 1994).

On the other hand, the participants' lives and deeds are a strength, and an examination of the lives of the participants and their answers to the questions indicates their actions are consistent with their comments. For example, the participants have shared characteristics such as winning awards for their social justice advocacy in areas such as poverty, peace, civil rights, education, medical ethics, business ethics, and gender issues. Therefore, the participants may serve as examples of the type of moral leadership advocated by Roepke (1995).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), in their discussion of verisimilitude, ask whether a particular text has a relationship to some agreed-upon opinion or opinions. These results expand on previously discussed studies such as Dalton and Petre's (1997) student moral leaders, Murphy and Enderle's (1995) ethical CEO leaders, Allahyari's (In Childs, 2001) investigation of moral formation in two charitable settings, and Colby and Damon's (1992) moral exemplars.

These findings also build on and clarify several questions posed by Piper (1989) who attempted to answer the question of moral formation when he stated that it is revealing in every culture to ask, "Where are the heroes?" He suggested that in order to answer that question, each culture must explore the realities of leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility and then provide interesting and exciting examples of these real people to students. He added that it is then beneficial to ask questions such as "What were the challenges these individuals faced? How did they sort through the options? What actions did they take? and what was it that led these individuals to conduct their affairs as they did?" (p. 27).

Conclusions and Implications

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study:

1. Moral leaders have very well defined ideas regarding their own moral and ethical formation—indicating influential factors such as parents, spirituality, education and/or teachers, mentors and/or friends, and peak events and/or life experiences.

2. Since the need for moral leadership is one of society's primary concerns (Roepke, 1995), these leaders' stories may serve as examples of the type of moral leadership advocated. Further, their rich descriptions provide a variety of templates to help nurses, physicians, psychologists, educators, spiritual leaders, writers, publishers, attorneys, political representatives, business people, activists, and others to foster moral leadership in themselves, their students, clients, constituents, families, and others.

3. Reflection for personal understanding as well as moral formation has value in gaining deeper understanding of life events. This understanding promoted an awareness that aided people in reframing negative experiences, profound losses and other painful events into the building blocks of personal moral leadership development.

A number of implications are indicated:

1. The participants' views regarding moral formation have implications for those identified by as being influential--parents, teachers, friends, leaders, and for nurses, physicians, religious leaders, psychologists, and others in the caring professions and social sciences who study such relationships. Those in these settings have opportunities and responsibilities for others, and they can use their relationships to foster moral leadership development.
2. This study has implications for health care professionals for their own moral leadership development, education of others and their support of others, both in individual and group settings. Understanding the factors that influenced the

14 participants, recognized for their moral leadership, can promote a keen awareness of moral development factors for health care professionals in their daily work as educators, clinicians, counselors, managers, and leaders in the health care system. Transformational therapeutic approaches may be used to support positive moral leadership development during stressful life shifts and experiences.

The future value of the findings of this study can be assessed by feedback from the readers of this study. Awareness of the patterns and processes the 14 moral leaders presented in this study provides a basis for further research using a more diverse sample, from Eastern religions, African Americans, and people who were not part of the 60s and 70s paradigm shifts.

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Appendix

Joan Chittister is a teacher, lecturer, and author. She is currently the Executive Director of Benetvision in Erie, Pennsylvania. Her work includes activism for peace and justice issues including the role of women in the church and society. She holds a Ph.D. in Speech Communication Theory from Pennsylvania State University. She has received numerous awards and honors for her work including nine honorary doctorates, two book awards, and a number of awards for her work for peace and women's issues.

Michael Crosby is a peace and justice advocate, lecturer, and author of nine books. His writing and lecturing topics address biblical spirituality for the first world society, corporate responsibility, and the use of money to promote positive social change. He has a Ph.D. in Theology.

Morris Dees is a civil rights attorney, university visiting law professor, and author who co-founded the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in Montgomery, Alabama founded to protect the legal and civil rights of poor people and others of all races through litigation and education. He has received numerous honors and awards for his work including 25 honorary degrees; he is the author of six books.

Shelley Douglass is a civil rights and peace activist and author who is the founder and current coordinator of Mary's House in Birmingham, Alabama, a house of hospitality for homeless families. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, she was part of movements of resistance to the Vietnam War and became involved in the evolving women's movement. She and her husband Jim helped to co-found the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

Pedro Jose Greer is a physician and Assistant Dean at the University of Miami School of Medicine. He is an advocate for the poor and founder/medical director of Camillus Health Concern, a free walk-in health care clinic for the homeless population of Miami-Dade County, Florida. His concern for access to quality health care extends beyond the scope of his patient population to embrace those who are generally considered the medically underserved in society. He has worked at local and national levels to raise consciousness concerning the plight of the underserved population and has advised the presidential administrations of President Bush and President Clinton in regard to health care.

Thomas Gumbleton is a peace and justice activist, author, past president of Bread for the World, and founding president of Pax Christi, USA. He has traveled to Iran, Iraq, Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Vietnam, and Hiroshima on behalf of peace and justice issues. His work focuses on church reform as well as societal peace and justice issues including opposition to the "just war theory" and concern for "the terrible misdistribution of the world's wealth." He has received numerous awards and honors for his work. In addition to his Doctor of Canon Law, he has received six honorary doctorates.

Tony P. Hall of Ohio was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for over 20 years. He served as chairman of the House Democratic Caucus Task Force on Hunger and as a House member on the steering committee of the Congressional Friends of Human Rights Monitors. In September of 2002, he was appointed as US Ambassador to the United Nation's World Food Program. He has worked actively to improve human rights conditions around the world, and in 1998, 1999, and 2001, Hall was nominated for

the Nobel Peace Prize for his hunger legislation and for his proposal for a Humanitarian Summit in the Horn of Africa.

Marie Carol Hurley served as a university instructor and has worked for peace and justice issues and in community service in Miami, Florida. She served as legislative aide to Congressman William Lehman and currently is the chairperson of the board of the Peace Education Foundation. This is an organization that is active in over 20,000 schools in the United States and is also in Canada, Argentina, and Jamaica.

Harold Kushner is best known for his book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, an international best seller published in 1981 and translated into 12 languages. In 1995, he won the Christopher Medal for his book, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* and was honored as one of 50 people who have made the world a better place in the past 50 years. In addition, he was called upon following the bombing in Oklahoma City and the events of September 11, 2001 to provide a perspective for dealing with crisis.

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a feminist theologian, author, and university professor at Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. Her lectures, writings, and courses address issues such as the interrelation of Christian theology and history to social justice issues including sexism, racism, poverty, militarism, ecology, and interfaith relations. She holds a Ph.D. in Classics and Patristics, has received 11 honorary doctorates, and is the author or editor of 32 books. She has traveled and lectured widely at universities and conferences.

Joseph Sciortino is a retired CEO of SYSCO and is co-founder of The Daily Bread Food Bank and Extra Helpings/Second Harvest. These are non-profit organizations

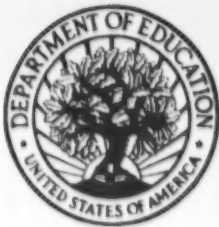
designed to help feed the hungry population of South Florida. The primary function of The Daily Bread Food Bank is to serve as a conduit through which edible but unmarketable surplus food is channeled to those in need. Each month the Daily Bread Food Bank distributes food through its warehouses in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties to agencies that serve senior citizen centers, homes for the handicapped, day care facilities, schools, and homes for the indigent.

Kathy Thornton is a Doctor of Ministry who has served since 1992 as National Coordinator of Network, the National Catholic Social Justice Lobby in Washington, DC. The goal of Network is to lobby and educate for social justice with a primary focus on how US policy and legislation affect those who are poor. NETWORK EDUCATION PROGRAM (NEP) was established in 1975 as the educational partner of Network. NEP is responsible for researching and publishing educational materials, as well as sponsoring workshops and seminars related to social justice.

Jim Wallis is author, activist, and co-founder of Sojourners community in inner city Washington, DC. He is Editor-in-Chief of *Sojourners* magazine that addresses peace and justice issues and examines the connection between and among faith, politics, and culture. He has written a number of books including *The Soul of Politics* that calls for a political morality combining social justice with personal responsibility. He travels extensively in the United States and internationally to speak and lead seminars. Recently he participated as an invited Fellow in Harvard's new Center for Values and Public Life.

Miriam Therese Winter is a songwriter, author, peace and justice activist, and professor at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut. Her courses and lectures address issues such as justice, hunger, homelessness, poverty, gender, liberation, and reconciliation, and

she is a fund raiser for children with AIDS and for abused and disadvantaged children in Connecticut. She holds a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies from Princeton and has published ten books. She is particularly concerned about gender-based issues and is an advocate nationally and internationally for an emerging feminist spirituality and for the full liberation of women.



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